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cannot go so long without food as their elders and cook them extras when they can. Women who stay at home in the village all morning roast ground-nuts for the little children, or bake them sweet potatoes in season, while all the young people forage for what they can get from various relatives, or look for fruits in the bush. Mothers going to work may be seen carrying smouldering embers on a bark holder, ready to make small fires to roast maize cobs if they happen to be ripe in the gardens. But when food is short the children have to go without and expect to do so, and as they reach adolescence they begin to adopt the tribal belief that it is childish and undignified to be eating at all hours of the day. They finally express the ordinary adult preference for a meal late in the day rather than early. Some natives comment half disparagingly on the frequency of the white man's meals, although of course they admire the riches of a European who is constantly able to entertain his friends. The white man, chiefly the government official in this area, has now become a standardized figure in a series of folk-tales, and in these he is always represented as stopping constantly in the middle of any activity to take breakfasts or to drink tea. I once listened to some small boys playing at being Europeans—a very favourite game. The boy who was acting as the district officer sat lounging in an imitation chair made of branches and bark rope and repeatedly called, 'Bring food'. At last one of his fellows, acting servant, said aside in an aghast whisper, 'You can't ask for food again. We've only just brought it to you.' The 'white man's' answer was immediate. 'You know nothing about Europeans! That is just what they do all day—just sit and call, Boy! Bring me food.'

The chief meal of the Bemba varies tremendously both as to its time, its size, and the accessory foods that may be added to it during the day. These changes depend chiefly on the nature of the women's agricultural work from season to season, the monthly changes in the types of food available, and the time taken to cook them. For instance, at Pambalasa village (September 1930), the women were working late into the day to finish piling the branches for burning in their gardens. They were back late to the village, and got the single meal ready at about five. There was no early morning snack for most of them. At Candamukulu's village (April 1931), the women were harvesting, but at this time of the year the maize was ripe, and a few cobs could be quickly roasted at about 8 a.m. as well as the evening meal, which varied in individual cases

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804 inside marking, or widespread education in counting the number of baskets put in and taken out, would make foresight more possible, and probably act indirectly as an incentive to increased production.

251 To conclude, the Bemba system of storage[1] allows them to keep their staple crop for a period of about a year, but is hardly efficient enough to make it possible to accumulate for longer periods. Their type of granary, combined with their system of calculation, prevents them from estimating with European precision the size of their crop. They know methods of preserving most of their accessory foodstuffs, however tasteless the results of the process. But in actual fact only very insignificant quantities of legumes and other vegetables are stored, and the people are still largely dependent on the bush for relishes, except in the months immediately after harvest.

The Bemba Kitchen

●372 Bemba methods of cookery depend on their type of fire-place and their cooking vessels. All heating is done over an open wood fire burning slowly on the floor of the hut with no chimney to draw up the smoke. The cooking vessels are placed directly over the fire supported on three conical clay stands (*amaphwasa*) about 1 foot high and 9 inches in diameter cemented on to the floor.

415 Bemba cooking vessels consist of open earthenware pots of various sizes and shapes which the enamel saucepans of the Europeans are only gradually beginning to oust. The largest pot used for making *ubwali* is known as an *inongo*. It is a big round vessel with an open mouth about 2 feet in diameter, but narrowing in slightly to form a neck. Each housewife reckons to have two or three *inongo* for cooking, but they are too heavy to carry to the river for water. For this purpose she uses a smaller pot with a narrower neck known as a *umutondo*. She may also cook stews in such a pot or in the little bowls about 9 inches in diameter known

[171]

[1] Other methods of storage are found among a number of the Central African tribes, e.g. the Ila build granaries on the walls of their huts with clay grain receptacles on the platforms (Smith and Dale, op. cit., vol. i, p. 121). Some of the Luba tribes in the Congo also build grain stores inside the hut, but keep maize and legumes outside on platforms on trees in grass containers (P. Colle, *Les Baluba*, 1913, p. 133). The Akele also store food in bundles tied to high platforms built in the centre of the village and thus protect the food from rats and mice (*Les Bushongo*, Torday and Joyce, 1925, p. 91).

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Mwamba, the second greatest Bemba chief but one, who lives about ten miles from the white centre of Kasama, where his young men go to work. Here I also saw an *ukutema* rite, but only the old men participated. The boys looked derisively on while the chief made obeisance before his ancestors' shrines, and they only joined the subsequent tree-cutting reluctantly because they were interested by my presence and wanted to have the right to drink the beer provided for the workers on their return. These were youths who despised agriculture as a pursuit fit only for the old, and laughed at everything commonly known as 'the things of the past' (*ifintu fya kale*.) Their conduct distressed the old men exceedingly, and the comments passed with shrugs and in asides were instructive. They showed the complete association in the Bemba mind between the chief's political authority and his power of blessing. If Mwamba had been a 'great chief', the argument ran, he would have been able to control his men. That he was not showed that the spirits did not favour him and that the land had gone 'hard'. It was hardly likely that the royal garden would prosper, therefore, or, of course, the rest of the *icalo*. Elsewhere individuals still seemed to pray to the *imipashi* before tree-cutting, although some Roman Catholics have begun to cross themselves instead, or as well, but the integrating function of the chief's or headman's ceremony is evidently very much decreased.

(*b*) *Firing the gardens.* The firing of the piled branches, the next act of the economic year, is also ritualized, but the ceremonial is not public in any sense, either at the capital or in an ordinary village, and most commoners were unable to give me an account of what happened at the firing of the chief's gardens. In this instance they wait for the *mfumu's* signal to fire their gardens, but not for news of the ceremony performed then. The rite depends on the Bemba belief in the danger of contaminated fire, that is to say, fire that has been touched by any one ceremonially impure. If such fire is considered harmful to the life of a young child, or a chief, and a bar to any approach to the *imipashi*, it is not unnatural that the people should believe it necessary to light their branch piles with new fire, that is to say, made with fire-sticks or matches. A commoner whom I saw fire his gardens, brought matches, lit a torch of grass, spat into the air, and cried out, 'Now you fire burn well, and let us go in peace.'[1] A headman should purify himself

[1] *We mulilo ulepyafye cisuma! Tuende no mutende!*

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and light new fire in his hut before going out to fire his garden, an act for which the other villagers wait, but do not participate in. At the capital the headman of the village (*umwine mushi*), an official with entirely ritual functions and placed in charge of one of the chief's sacred fires, must extinguish his own fire overnight, borrow new fire from a second sacred hearth in the morning, purify himself with the aid of his wife, and go out with a glowing cinder of the royal fire to light the gardens. I never saw this rite carried out at the capital, and its privacy, as in the case of all ceremonial appertaining to the chief's fire, was stressed. The ritualizing of this particular economic process seemed to me to depend on the beliefs in the nature of fire and its sacred properties rather than on anything connected with the agricultural activity itself.

(*c*) *Sowing ceremonies.* Among the Bemba sowing ceremonies are insignificant compared to the tree-cutting rites. The staple millet seeds are not blessed at all, although they are doctored usually with the *icibyalilo* magic. Prayers are only offered to the *imipashi* in the case of subsidiary crops, and not by any means for all of these. Pumpkins, cow-peas, Livingstone potatoes, Kaffir corn, maize, and the *amankolobwe* are those usually given as the list.[1] Of course, the ritual may have been fuller in the old days. The Bisa and the Ushi describe a ceremony similar to those of a number of the Southern Bantu, in which the headman or the chief blesses or doctors handfuls of seeds given him by each of the women of the community, and these specially treated seeds are mixed with the rest to be sown. But among the Bemba I only collected one account of a rite of this sort. The *bakabilo* tell of a sowing ceremony at the Paramount's court following the special tree-cutting rite performed by Mulewa Cimfwembe in the old days (cf. p. 371). They say that after the latter had 'watched the trees of the land', and fire had been set to the royal garden, another hereditary official, the Kamenge, took his place to watch the freshly sown seeds until the ripening of the crop. He also kept sex taboos and lived apart in a grass shelter during this time. This act was known as 'watching the seeds of the chief'. It has evidently not been performed for two reigns at least. Another lost sowing

[1] Compare the list of crops for which the first-fruit rites are performed. It will be seen that Junod's suggestion that such rites remain associated with the older African crops is largely borne out (cf. p. 20), but maize is, of course, a more recent introduction, possibly included as it is sown and also ripens at the same time as most of the others listed above.

789 [758] witchcraft, handled by people believed to have supernatural powers.

(ii) *The magic influence of sex, blood and fire* which, when brought 789 into wrongful contact with each other, are thought to be highly 831 dangerous to every Bemba, but particularly to babies and young ● 372 children, who are believed to be vulnerable to so many dangers; and to chiefs, on whom the prosperity of the land is held to depend. This system of beliefs is extremely complex, and yet it is necessary to try to understand it, if the meaning of the chisungu is to be grasped. The dogma relating sex and fire is the *idée maîtresse* behind most of the ritual behaviour of the Bemba.

838 Briefly speaking, sex relations according to Bemba dogma make 784 a couple 'hot'. In this state it is dangerous for them to approach 783 the ancestral spirits in any rite of prayer or sacrifice; and any chief 622 or headman who attempted to perform such a ceremony without purification would run the risk of bringing disaster on his district. [793] The chief's shrines are guarded by old women or hereditary priests who keep sex taboos. For the chief to be casual in keeping sex taboos, or to approach his ancestors without purification is 'to spoil the land' (*ukuwonaula icalo*).

831 All persons of sex maturity are in fact distinguished by a special 372 term (*wa kuboko*) and are excluded from a number of rites on the 784 ground that they are 'hot', or are likely to be 'hot'. Such people 783 can pollute the fireplace of a hut by touching it, and then a baby 854 fed with gruel cooked on this fire might sicken and die. Parents 846 who do not purify themselves after intercourse run the risk of killing their children by accidentally touching the family hearth. Adulterers are more dangerous still, as they cannot purify themselves since the necessary rite can only be carried out by husband and wife. Small babies and their mothers are therefore kept away from beer drinks where 'bad' people congregate drinking round the fire without care. The baby's gruel is often cooked on a separate hearth and in a separate pot. The art of Bemba motherhood in fact consists very largely in guarding children from danger from fire. A newly born baby is 'unripe' (*mabisi*) and is in a specially precarious position until it has been 'taken' by its parents (*ukupoka umwana*) by an act of intercourse and the lighting of new fire, when it is a few months old. To save the baby, it must be 'brought to the fire' by being held over the flames of a doctored

fire when it is first placed to the breast, or when the cord falls off 831
(*ukumwalawila*). If its father is away and the ceremony of 'taking 372
the child' cannot take place, the baby is given medicine (*umuti wa* 784
lucshya). The mother and the midwife extinguish the old fire, mud 783
the hut and light a new fire. Then they carry the baby to the men's 854
shelter where there are presumably many youths 'with heat' or 846
'with bad things', or to a kitchen where the people have been known not to have done the purification ceremony. In this dangerous company, they give the baby gruel cooked on the new fire to make it immune. The rite of *ukumukokotola* is a ceremonial [841]
spitting of raw food on the baby by a menstruating woman so that the baby can be safely touched by a woman who is in this condition. All these methods are believed to secure immunity on homoeopathic principles.

The chief's sacred fire, the fire of the land, must be protected 372
with even greater care. It is placed in a separate hut and watched 622
by a senior wife, past child bearing. The chief's food is usually cooked by a man and not a woman.

To remove the dangers due to sex intercourse a special cere- 833
mony is required and this is one which can only be performed by a 783
legally married couple. Hence the close links between the rules of 581
ritual and those governing marriage ties, and the great importance of magic belief in determining the strength of the marital relationship. At marriage each girl is presented by her paternal aunt with a miniature pot about 2½ inches in diameter which must be guarded [585]
with the utmost secrecy. With this the purification rite is carried out. It is filled with water and placed on the fire, man and wife each holding the rim. Water from the pot is then poured by the wife on to her husband's hands, and some say on to the wife's as well. New 'pure' fire is then relit either by means of fire-sticks, or, as is usual nowadays, with matches. This apparently simple rite is the essential act which removes the condition of hotness from the body of man and wife and renders them free to touch a hearth with impunity or to approach the ancestral spirits. Some say that it used to be performed after each sex act and others that it was merely done before some ceremony of special undertaking such as harvesting. It is still spoken of with the utmost secrecy and shyness and still survives even in the face of strong opposition from

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833 783 581 missionaries. In the ritual life of a chief the pot ceremony is of particular importance.[1]

The ritual links uniting a married couple are thus particularly strong in this society. It is husband and wife who perpetually carry out the dangerous act of sex together, who thereby put themselves in each other's power, and who depend on each other for the ceremonial purification which neither can carry out alone.[2] The marriage relationship is ritualized from the start.

● 372 783 On important ritual occasions, such as the 'warming' of a new village site, the installation of a chief, a marriage, a death, or the protection rites for a young child, the old fire must be extinguished and a new fire lit with fire-sticks or matches, and the floor of the hut freshly mudded over. These are signs that the pollution is definitely removed. The fire is also harmed by objects or persons that are 'cold'. Contact with a dead body makes a fire cold, or [841] contact with a menstruating woman, who is described in polite speech as 'being in a state of coldness' (*Akuba na mpepo*) or as 'fearing fire' (*atina wmulilo*). People who eat food cooked on the fire by such women are liable to illness.

841 372 The most constant danger to the family fire is in fact the touch of the housewife herself, when she is passing through her periods. Then she must be careful not to touch the family fire that her husband or her children use. She has her own small fire separate from the main fire, and if it goes out, she can only borrow from a woman past child-bearing or a girl who has not reached puberty. [833] Intercourse with her husband would be almost unthinkable for her during these days and there are heavy penalties attached to the shedding of the menstrual blood by accident. A girl who allowed a drop of blood to fall on her husband's bed or who washed in the stream where others washed is thought to threaten illness to those near her. I was told she would be punished by her fellows by being made to sit over a fireplace till her flesh was scorched.

At the end of a period the old fire is extinguished; a ritual act of [784] intercourse takes place and a new fire lit (*ukusangulula*), the word used for the similar purification performed after a village has been polluted by death.

[1] Cf. my *Land, Labour and Diet in Northern Rhodesia*, 1939, p. 363.

[2] Only the head wife of a polygamist can perform the pot ceremony for him. Hence the legal and ritual difference in status between her and her co-wives.

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A murderer or a lion-killer can also harm a fire by being 'hot'. 783
They have done something fierce and must not eat cooked food 784
without purification. The clue to the solution of a murder case trial during my stay in the country was discovered by a Bemba detective who overheard the statement that on such and such a night, *X* and *Y* did not eat with the other men. 'They were eating their food cold'. In other words they had not yet been purified, and could not come near the common fire and hence could be presumed to be murderers.

It is difficult to exaggerate the strength of these beliefs, or the 372
extent to which they affect daily life. In a village at cooking-time 783
young children are sent here and there to fetch 'new fire' from neighbours who are ritually pure. Women in their periods call their sisters to cook for them. Young married women are seen sitting outside beer parties, and explain 'I have a young baby'. All the medicines have been taken and the protective rites done, but there is always the possibility that an adulterer might touch the fire when he is drunk and the beer might be polluted thereby.

There are other sources of danger. The first intercourse with a 833
girl after her initiation ceremony has been performed is considered 622
to be a perilous act. It is carried out with special ritual precautions and in the case of a chief, it must be undertaken by a special court official, (*kaulu*), who takes the risk on himself. This man must 'eat the chisungu' of the girl before she is taken to the chief. Yet, in spite of this danger, it is this act above all others which initiates the ritual relationship between husband and wife and it is valued on this account, so that a young man can claim damages if his [836]
betrothed has been seduced after her initiation ceremony, but before the marriage, for it is said that the chisungu of the girl has been stolen from him in this case.

One of the most fatal acts of all was for a girl to bear a child 848
before she had been initiated or before one of the more abbrevi- 777
ated rites now performed at puberty was carried out. Her child would then be a creature of ill-omen—*wa mputula*—who would bring misfortune on any village in which it lived. The child would be a portent of evil. It would stop rain falling. It would make the granaries empty quickly. It might bring dissension. The father and mother of such a child should therefore be driven out

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848 777 into the bush with their baby to save the community from danger.

783 372 753 The penalties which fall on those who come in contact with polluted fire are always envisaged as illnesses, mainly of the chest (*cifuba*) and such complaints are very common in Lubemba as we saw. It is important to notice too that the punishment falls on the innocent and not the guilty. The adulterous woman who touches her hearth-stone causes her husband to fall ill 'of the chest' if he accidentally comes near the fire. The father who is 'impure' through illicit intercourse 'kills his child with fire' (*ukumwipaya umulilo*) so that the baby starts to waste away and then to die.

581 768 783 The reader will have gathered that strong mystic links are thought to exist between husband and wife. Though marriage appears unstable in Lubemba compared with the unions contracted by some of the patrilineal Bantu in South Africa, yet the destinies of husband and wife are mysteriously joined. If one partner dies, the other must sleep with some social equivalent of the dead—a brother or uterine nephew or a maternal grandson in the case of a dead man, or a sister or granddaughter in the case of a dead woman. This is to 'take the death off' the living partner. A member of the dead man or woman's matrilineage has to fetch back his or her spirit from the living spouse and makes him or her free to remarry.

833 826 837 But this is only one example of the belief that the guardian spirit (*mupashi*) and the blood of man and woman mix in sex relationships. Women of loose morals in Northern Rhodesian towns are said to bear few children because they 'mix the blood' of Bemba and men of other tribes. Again, a man who sleeps with two women unites the three in a relationship that is magically perilous. The blood is mixed (*mulopa wasakanya*). If woman *A* commits adultery with *B* and the legitimate wife of *B* sees the blood of *A* from a scratch, a tattooed mark or during menstruation, then she, the guiltless partner, will die at once unless saved by the right medicine. So also if *X*, a man, sleeps with the wife of *Y*, and *Y* sees the blood of *X* by misadventure, then *Y*, the guiltless partner, will die.

833 837 691 For mother and daughter to sleep with the same man, albeit unknowingly, is a terrible thing. For an adulterer to pass the dead body of his mistress's husband, or any other man who has slept

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with her, is also a danger to all the men concerned. These triple relationships are constantly mentioned in court cases and are made the subject of claims by the injured family of a dead man or woman who declare that 'their child' has been killed in that way. They recur in narratives of the rather lurid sex lives of Bemba princesses who are expected to take many lovers, but must not bring trouble on the land by simultaneous relations of this kind.

Lastly, in common with many Bantu peoples, Bemba believe that, if a man commits adultery while his wife is pregnant, the baby is born dead. He has taken the spirit of the child (*asendo umupashi wa umwana*). If the woman is unfaithful while she is pregnant, then she herself dies in childbirth unless she confesses and gets medicine in time.[1]

I have dilated on this system of attitudes and beliefs because I think it fundamental to the understanding of Bemba puberty ritual and also because it cannot fail, I think, to strike the field-worker in this area as one of the basic elements of tribal dogma. It would be impossible to live long in a Bemba village without running constantly across instances of the effects of these beliefs whether in terms of ritual or in the most practical problems of cooking, catering and entertaining. If the Bemba can be said to have an ideological obsession in the sense that they are constantly pre-occupied with one set of fears, it is this belief in the magical potency of sex, fire and blood. Such emotional attitudes set us puzzling problems. In this chapter I shall confine myself to stating them. Later in the book I hope at least to suggest some hypotheses which may stimulate comparative research in other tribes holding similar beliefs.

To recapitulate, Bemba dogma stresses the role of the ancestors in determining human fortunes as well as the power of injured spirits, who revenge the injustices they suffered on earth on the

[1] It will be seen from the above that the causes of barrenness or death in childbirth are numerous among the Bemba. Barrenness may be due to the special curse of the father's sister; to an injured spirit returning to punish a descendant at random; to allowing the umbilical cord of a baby to fall to the ground; to adultery; or to witchcraft. Miscarriage is thought to be due to an injured spirit shaking the womb of the pregnant woman so that the baby falls out; when it occurs all the women of the matrilineage must be treated with medicine. Death in childbirth is due to the adultery of the mother herself.

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769 living. It also emphasises the magical powers associated with sex
831 which is linked with feelings of guilt and anxiety expressed in the taboos clustered round marriage, childbirth and the rearing of children. This feeling of guilt is so widely diffused that innocent
[783] people are thought to suffer from the magical results of a sex misdemeanour committed by someone else.

581 These beliefs support the institution of marriage since safety
789 from magical danger is acquired by means of a ceremony which can
837 only be carried out by a man's head wife. No Bemba supposes that a husband will be kept from adultery by this means, but the legal wife is the only person who can secure him and those near him from the resultant punishment.

622 The reader is asked to bear in mind, without attempting further
372 analysis, the association that exists in Bemba ideology between
831 chieftainship, fire, sex and power to influence the fertility of the
789 land and its people, and to remember that these powers are hurt
753 by blood, intercourse out of marriage, death, murder, lion-killing and all cold, terrible or 'bad things' (*ifibi*). Fertility which is so much desired is produced by conduct pleasing to the ancestors, and to senior and especially paternal relatives, the blessings of persons in authority and the carrying out of the ritual of marriage. Illness is inflicted usually on the innocent party, by sex relations out of marriage without ritual purification, by bad conduct, and because of injury to people who, since they have died in a state of righteous indignation, will 'come back' to haunt the family which did them wrong.

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

642 The most characteristic features of the Bemba social structure
611 are its hierarchical and authoritarian type of government, of which
591 the apex is a paramount chief believed to have supernatural powers; and its system of matrilineal descent with uxorilocal marriage.

643 The political structure of the Bemba is a centralized one. Its unity under a single head, the *Citimukulu*, was achieved, in 1931 at any rate, because of a belief in the spiritual powers the king was

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The Ceremony

Then the girls were pulled to the front and told to invite the company to eat. They sang:

> '*The food from our gardens is finished.*
> *Help yourselves, mothers*' (No. 18)

('We older women say, "Now we have danced the child as a gardener. She must start to cultivate herself now".' (*Fwe abakalamba twacindila umwana wa umulimi. Nomba ali no kulimishya.*))

There followed an endless business of handling the seeds which were offered to everyone present in order of seniority and then handed back. It was a relief when the father of one of the girls danced into the hut and did a capering solo in honour of the *nacimbusa*, throwing a cheap bracelet into one of the baskets. He was criticised as being mean in his gift, but the dance was done with great dash and gaiety.

The ritual lighting of the girls' fire (*namushimwa*)

An important stage in the ceremony had now been reached—the lighting of the new fire. This might be described as the first of the rites of aggregation. The senior 'father's sister' of one of the girls, wrinkled and bent with rheumatism, danced to the company and then lay down on her back. Nangoshye picked up a fire stick and started twirling it round in the groove on the old woman's thigh, telling the two girls to copy her afterwards. Then the two old women set out to make fire in earnest. Women do not commonly make fire among the Bemba. The work needs skill and practice as well as considerable strength. The two old women rubbed the fire stick in turns, sweating and groaning with the effort. The company swayed to and fro moaning the chisungu fire songs:

> '*We have come to beg fire,*
> *Lion we beg it of you.*' (No. 19)

and

> '*Scratch, Scratch* (*The grating of the fire-sticks*),
> *How many children have you borne?*' (No. 20)

After half an hour of growing anxiety, I offered a box of matches which are commonly reckoned as 'new fire' in Bemba ceremonial.

The Ceremony

881 606 372a This was received with shocked protest, 'No, this isn't just ordinary fire. Alas, Mother! We can't use matches.' It seemed an impasse.

At last, to the intense relief of everyone, the wood shaving set to catch the sparks began to smoke and a little flame flickered up. Clapping broke out and cries of 'ulla! ulla!' saluted the new fire. It was a curiously moving moment because of the tenseness of the women packed tight on the floor of the hut through the long wait.

The rite is described shortly as 'to beg for parenthood' (*ukulomba ubuyumbi*). The father's sister plays the leading part in [842] the ceremony and it is she who by tradition influences the fertility of the girl. 'The sticks must be rubbed on the back of the father's sister so that the girl will bear a child quickly.'

881 625 372 (As we have seen the lion is equated throughout this ceremony with the bridegroom, the chief, or the male principle. Two women when questioned about the song (No. 19) just said, 'The lion is a chief.' Fire is also equated with generation. The girl owes parenthood to the older women who have made fire for her, 'We say to the girl "We women have made your fire for you. We are in pain now. Our hands ache from the rubbing. You must take over now".')[1]

881 372 Twigs and sticks were deftly built round the young flame and a considerable fire began to crackle. Nangoshye crawled towards it on all fours with a water pot on her head. The two girls crawled behind her clasping their arms round her waist. All three lowered the water pot on to the fire with hands and teeth. I have no recorded comments on this part of the rite. I think it almost certainly symbolises the heating of the marriage pot of the girl which is stood on the fire by an old woman with the bridegroom and bride clasping her waist. It may also signify the handing over of the fire from the old to the young as suggested in the comment above.

881 The seeds in the winnowing basket were now divided out so that each woman had a handful to cook. The remains were thrown into the big pot over the fire, the pot of the *nsumatshimwa*. We all retired exhausted to our own quarters to eat for the first time since morning.

[834] [1] A.C. adds: 'You cannot beg fire from a woman in a different sexual condition. The girl must have a new fire after her chisungu. She must not have intercourse during menstruation.'

754 of magical forces in sorcery. The *mulosbi* is a man who kills without rhyme or reason, an enemy of society who kills from a distance, who is associated with black birds and who steals parts of the body from newly dug graves.(1) Enemies may also be killed by the use of medicine, either apparently by an evilly disposed person or by the *Ng'anga* who may be employed to defend someone who believes he is attacked.(2)

831 372 *Sex and Fire.* Characteristic of this group of peoples is the series of beliefs associated with the magic potency of sex when used according to certain rules, and, connected with this, the danger of the pollution of domestic fires or the fires of chiefs by contact with adulterers or evil livers. Such beliefs are the basis of the multiplication of small protective rites associated with chieftainship, the bringing-up of children, and the girls' initiation ceremony.(3)

SOME IMPORTANT RITUALS

788 241 The most important ceremonies carried out amongst the Bemba are as follows:-

(1) *Economic Rites.* At the time of the firing of the bush the chief or headman places an axe at the head of his bed at night or, in the case of a chief, in the relic shrine. Sowing ceremonies at the Paramount's capital used to be elaborate, but are now reduced to the placing of seeds in the relic shrines; similar ceremonies are done by headmen. The first-fruits rites, when the tasting of the new crops takes place, were also formerly elaborate among the Bemba. They are still carried out in an abbreviated form at the capital, and headmen place in their small spirit huts portions of each new crop.

746 782 (2) *Ceremonial in Chieftainship.* The most elaborate forms of ceremonial amongst the Bemba are those that surround the burial of a dead chief, the installation of his successor and the moving of his village. In the old days the death of a Paramount Chief was concealed for a few days while his followers fled from the capital and the sacred relics were moved to a place of safety. The ritual buriers then took charge and dried the body and covered it with a sauce made of beans, carefully preserving the toe and finger nails. After a year the corpse was carried round the Paramount's territory and human victims were sacrificed on each spot where the body rested at night. The body was then carried across the Chambasi river where it was received by the *shimwalule* who carried it into the sacred grove. The favourite wives of the chief and some of his slaves were put into the grave to hold the body of the *Citimbulo* and were stifled as the earth was filled in. Although cattle are not kept in the area, the body was wrapped in the skin of an ox.

643 The installation of a chief is a similarly complex process, in which all the *bababilo* and *bafungo* play their part. Important elements were the transfer of the sacred relics to the new capital, the lighting of the chief's new fire, and the installation of his head wife. Details of this form of ceremonial are not available from the associated tribes, but it is certain that

(1) For some comments on the relation between witchcraft and psychopathology, see Davidson, 1949.
(2) Richards, 2, 1935. (3) Richards, 7, 1940.

7:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1940 FQ5 Bemba FQ5

food, and to protect his person and that of the sacred relics from the contagion of illness, death, or sexual defilement.[1]

The ritual by which a successor to the chieftainship is converted from an ordinary individual to a ruler with almost divine powers, has a good deal of political importance. It confers authority on the priests—in this case hereditary officials (*bakabilo*) who carry it out—and gives them, as we shall see, considerable power to check the chief himself. The complete ritual by which the *umupashi* of a dead ruler is liberated to guard the land he governed, and the new heir is installed, is too complex to describe here and now. Briefly speaking, it consists of the desiccation of the body during a period of a year, from one kafir-corn harvest to the next; its burial in a special grove (with human sacrifices in the old days); and the building of a shrine on the site of the deserted capital. To make the new chief, *bakabilo* must preside at the installation of a new great wife, arrange for the sexual purification of the royal pair, and the lighting of their new sacred fire.[2] They must hand over to the heir the heirlooms (*bakenye*) of which they have been in charge during the interregnum, and must finally found a new village and build again the sacred huts in which the relics are to be kept. Such a ceremonial may take eighteen months to two years and the participation of all the *bakabilo* and hereditary buriers (*bafingo*) in the case of the paramount; a lesser time and very many fewer priestly dignitaries in the case of the territorial chiefs. The secrecy and awe surrounding these ceremonies is, I believe, one of the ways by which the people's reverence for their chiefs is maintained.

(*b*) *Legal Rules of Descent and Succession.* Against this background of beliefs as to the continuity between one generation and another, the nature of descent and succession is defined exactly by legal rule. Descent in the royal family is reckoned to the time of first occupation of the country, and twenty-five to thirty Citimukulus are remembered. In the case of a territorial chief, the line of ancestors is not so long, and most are described as having been 'born in the country'. Most of the names honoured are those of men but some are those of women, and it seems that

[1] cf. my *Land, Labour and Diet in Northern Rhodesia* (1939), chap. xvii.

[2] Hence the importance of the great wife of the chief (*umukulo wa cale*) in the political life of the tribe and the belief that her behaviour also influences the welfare of the land.